Human Transformation Independent of Knowledge and Time

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Some twenty years ago I was privileged to be invited by the world renowned spiritual teacher, Jiddu Krishnamurti, to undertake with him a series of video-taped dialogues. Their object was to bring forward the kernel of his teaching. In essence he taught that each human being is responsible for bringing about his or her own transformation, which is not dependent on knowledge or time. In another context he wrote in his own hand that: "The core of Krishnamurti's teaching is contained in the statement he made in 1929 when he said 'Truth is a pathless Land'."

These two statements, namely, that one's own transformation is independent of knowledge and time and that truth is a pathless land are most intimately related. Though on first glance they seem markedly distinct, nonetheless these statements are inseparable. On perceiving the reciprocal union of these two principal affirmations, one glimpses the ~~reciprocal~~ undivided

* integridad / intacto

nature of genuine spirituality.

Spirituality and wholeness ~~are~~ are also inseparable but the splendid word, wholeness, has in recent decades fallen on miserable times. It is used by many now to express the goal of growth techniques and methods by one or another party with a program to sell. This misuse of the word has provincialized the concept and turned it into a catchword that divides rather than heals. But this fine word can be rectified and restored to its proper usage if it is reunited to spirit instead of being left naked to the agendas of traditional and popular psychologies. This hard remark provokes the question of the meaning of ~~the~~ each word, spirituality and wholeness. I hope the progress of this paper will begin to disclose their meaning until at the conclusion of this essay I shall attempt a formulation that perhaps will help restore the words to their home ground.

The topic of this paper does not lend itself to the usual academic approach of research that leads to erudition. On the contrary it does not move by adding one thing to another whether by information or analysis. It moves not by addition but by subtraction; it seeks not more but less. This is because it labors in the field of self-inquiry. It moves in the mode of meditation.

Authentic self-inquiry has received little attention throughout the long stretch of recorded human history. This is because genuine self-inquiry is independent of both outward and inward authority – the outward being the imposition of political and economic constraints and the inward being the tyranny of ideas and the stream of consciousness that flows from them and feeds them.

Outward authority is easily recognized, the police state is its crudest form. Inward authority is much more subtle. It is a psychological self-bondage. To make matters worse, it harbors an ambivalence. ~~On the one hand~~ It lets itself be dominated by scientific, philosophical and religious ideas which it receives at second and third hand yet at the same time it intellectually and emotionally drugs itself into a virtual substance dependency on ~~scientific~~ these ~~philosophical and religious~~ ideas and ideals. A principal mark of psychological self-bondage is that these ideas and ideals ~~are contemplated in abstraction only~~ while in their fancied modes of truth, goodness and beauty are contemplated in abstraction only. Embodying them in real life is shunned like the plague, moral and spiritual

~~courage~~ cowardice are endemic to our species whereas physical courage is demonstrated in one form or another everyday. As for moral courage, who among us is ready to stand alone against a majority of our fellows. As for spiritual courage, who among us is ready upon the instant to die the psychological death to our very imagined self-identity without which death there can be no self-liberation?

These questions cannot be answered collectively by common consent nor by meanderings among the denizens of the so called collective unconscious. They can be answered only by the individual, by myself alone and unaccompanied. Genuine self-inquiry realizes which this groundless ground is virgin, uncharted, pathless and unimagined. One's persona disappears into this unthought and nameless emptiness for this emptiness is reality and reality is neither an event nor an experience.

These words are unintelligible ~~the persona~~ so long as the persona is mistaken for the self. Self-inquiry reveals the persona as an ephemeral phenomenon of the self. To put the matter loosely, while the me is mistaken for the I

The words in the previous paragraph will remain enigmatic and for some, plain gibberish. This is why pure self-inquiry has received little attention throughout the long stretch of recorded human history. That level of human transformation which is independent of knowledge and time is not realized outside of self-inquiry and for that reason it remains a rarity.

At this point in our discussion it is necessary to point up that a fatal misconception which holds that self-inquiry and introspection are one and the same. This misunderstanding arises out of a failure to discern that the inward world of motives, moods, feelings and wishes is equally external to the ego as is the outer world we see, hear, touch, smell and taste. On grasping the centrality of the ego and its standpoint one is in a position to give both the outer and inner worlds their due. It is from this base and standpoint that most of the higher products of culture in the arts and sciences spring in all their ideality and beauty. Their ideality stretches indefinitely into the past while in the present artistic and scientific ideality anticipate the novel future.

Unfortunately, the egoic standpoint does not overcome the illusion that the ego is an independent substance in being. This illusion generates the force of the twin concepts, personality and experience. These two concepts, personality and experience, undergird the theoretical structures of theology, philosophy and depth psychology. Even the transpersonal psychologist concerned to study the common root of personality is still faced with the question ultimately of what and who are my client and my colleague. What and who is the agent who interprets the clinical data awaiting diagnosis?

Only intelligence is required for self inquiry and not any of the games of egoic intellect which impose rules of dogma, doctrine, ways and means, method and scope. Housed as these are within conventional interpretations and social structures they are rarely studied for their power both to hide and to disclose their roots. Such roots reach down into the subsoil of primordial wisdom. Historically those few who touched this wisdom have most often paid dearly for it. Witness in the western tradition the excentrions

of Jesus and Socrates.

If not in league with the egoic standpoint, what is the character of that intelligence which attracts, supports and illuminates pure self-inquiry? This question and the question of the self are inseparable for when they are studied with a pure act of attention these questions reveal that the ego so far from being at the center of the self is as external to it as the world of the five senses and the internal world of thought, will and feeling: they are the worlds of body and sense and the self cannot be reduced to either or both of them.

The latter half of our twentieth century which is about to close has seen a growing enthusiasm for the religious thought of the South Asian and Far Eastern traditions. It is almost as though the far-ranging western missionary movements of the nineteenth century are being answered this century from the east. The dialogue that this phenomenon engenders ~~helps to~~ stimulates us to investigate what there is of authentic spirituality in our own western tradition.

It will not offend Krishnamurti's spirit if in this meditation ~~I~~ if I refer to scriptural passages from our own western

tradition and from others. In our eighteen video-taped conversations I quoted a number of scriptural references from various cultures. He never once objected to this practice. Rather, he objected to the misuse of sacred texts. Unless one risks the living out of whatever there is of truth in such texts, they remain a meaningless clutter of so called knowledge, a heap confined in the past and in no sense an occasion for present self-awakening! Psychological knowledge is what is meant here and not practical know-how, which is knowledge of a different order.

Plato's virtual transcription of Socrates' Apology remains one of clearest invitations to self-inquiry in our western tradition. Just before his judges render the verdict that will execute him Socrates says, "an unexamined life is not worth living." In the text he includes his own life in this. In saying that an unexamined life is not worth living he necessarily invites the question: who is the examiner and the examinee? If it is my life that I am examining, where do I, the examiner, leave off and my life as object begin? Or looked at from the standpoint of my life, the examined, where does my life leave off and I, the examiner begin? Furthermore, where does my life leave off and

the life of another and others begin? I am not raising these questions for the sake of mystification or as a shrewd rhetorical device by which to benumb ~~our~~ a critical focus ~~attention~~. On the contrary, if one sits with them quietly they open out upon a crucial distinction between two ~~orders of~~ attention. One we give to physical and technical matters which require a change of position in temporal ~~time~~ or spatial ~~space~~ objects. The other ~~a~~ attention we give to attitudes which we take for granted in our relatively unconscious lust for security and a settled life. It is this latter attention which property obtains ~~when~~ while one is examining one's life.

Only such a non-utilitarian attention can reveal how it is the case that human transformation is independent of knowledge and time.

Let us examine the possibility of such a transformation through contemplating the relation of knowledge to time, of understanding to timelessness and of not-misunderstanding to ~~and~~ timing. As we look into these, the meaning of the topic of this meditation ~~should~~ might come clearer as well as the character of spirituality and wholeness.

The English word, 'knowledge', is etymologically somewhat obscure. However,

what seems fairly certain is that it derives from Middle English where in that form it meant to ~~a~~ admit, confess. The element of confession gives the word a certain religious aura which confers upon it a high seriousness. An anterior etymology relates 'knowledge' to 'note' whose main source is Latin 'nota', a brand, a mark by which one recognizes what is at hand. These two etymological roots lends the word 'knowledge' a high respect and a degree of permanency.

Both these characteristics of the word point to the ease with which the concept ~~knowledge~~ 'knowledge' has attained to its eminence.

The word's relation to time is clearly on the side of the past since what bears a mark has already been branded. The bearer of the brand is easily reduced in the mind to a tool for carrying the mark as the mark is all important for identification; yet it remains an abstraction. As an abstraction it has the power to last well beyond the existence of its bearers. This seemingly magical property so enhances its dignity that it is easily forgotten that the mark, as such, is of the past and to fix the mind upon it

imagineering it an authentic creature of the present is to misunderstand oneself and the mark, also.

These remarks do not apply to the practical order where the uses of memory are absolutely necessary. One could not drive a car, wash dishes, get to work or operate the most sophisticated instruments without the uses of memory, let alone undertake prodigious reckonings in the calculative order.

On the contrary, I refer here to the matter of attitude, i.e., whether the measure of my present living is a mark from the past to which I am attached or whether my attention is one of listening and looking, free from ~~without~~ attachment. One of the keys to how knowledge can and almost certainly does govern attitude is furnished by our word recognition. To recognize is to know again. We cannot recognize what we have not known before. This is crucial for our emotional relation to symbol, dogma and ritual since all three relate so intimately to our belief structures. These structures we impose upon the present by ~~with~~ whatever means ~~[illegible]~~ we feel necessary and appropriate to make the present in every particular

continuities with the past. Any break in this dreary chain we interpret as a threat to where and how we are in the world. This species of fear is one of the principal causes of continuing religious and political violence ~~persecution~~ the world over, to say nothing of neighborhood and domestic conflicts ~~violence~~. These are only some of the symptoms of reactionism, a universal and endemic human disease. To probe ~~[illegible]~~ this phenomenon more deeply would require a keen examination of the abuse of imagination in which fantasy is mistaken for fact. It is enough for this paper seriously to note ~~[illegible]~~ ~~seriously~~ reactionism for the deadly disease that it is.

The seminal Spanish philosopher, José Ortega y Gasset, has put this succinctly in his <u>Meditations on Quixote</u>. He wrote this paradoxical formula, "the death of what is dead is life. There is only one way to dominate the past, the realm of things that have perished: to open our veins and inject some of our blood into the empty veins of the dead. This is what the reactionary cannot do: treat the past as a form of life. He pulls it out of the sphere of vitality, and, thoroughly dead as it is, he places it on its throne so that it may rule over our souls." Even

though Ortega is here describing what he took to be a cultural tendency of Spain to set up what he called an oppressive "oligarchy of the dead" his image is exact for our own personal misuse of memory. Our inveterate habit of superimposing upon the present an image from the past is devastating to interpersonal relationships since it disables us from meeting the other with a fresh and innocent eye. Before we are aware of it, the experience of our first encounter with the other, converts to a belief and from then on each new experience with the other is reduced in our mind to that belief. Such an attitude and conviction are lethal to understanding and leave us perennial prisoners of time, cemented in the past.

There is a distinction between knowledge as static and knowing as dynamic which points a way out of ~~this~~ this bondage. Knowing is a movement free from slavery ~~bondage~~ to its source. Within knowing we can distinguish three orders: knowing which serves the practical order, knowing which is accumulative, additive and increases the store of static knowledge. Thirdly, there is knowing which is non-accumulative,

non-additive which moves through each present instant taking in the unprecedented as that is disclosed to it without beginning or end. Here the mind contemplates its object without imposing upon it any agenda whatsoever.

There is a remarkable text in St John's Gospel which, when translated strictly from the Greek, discloses this this untrammeled way of knowing: "This is eternal life, that they should keep on knowing thee the only true God----" I am not concerned in the implicit theology of this text. It is the phrase, "that they should keep on knowing----" which arrests attention in the context of this meditation. Here, the verb 'to know' is in the present active subjunctive. The subjunctive is a mood expressing potentiality; the present tense indicates an ongoingness.

The term, eternal life, joins two words that seem mutually exclusive. Classically, eternity has meant timeless existence, i.e., existence without change. This is not the same as infinite time or endless duration. Eternity is the ever abiding now without respect to any then or when, any past or future. However, life

as we ordinarily understand it, is subject to time. For the individual or the collective life comes to be and passes away. The life of a thing has a beginning a middle and an end, a life cycle. Finite existence which is existence subject to change endures a temporal career. Then what can eternal life possibly mean for a mortal existence. Our text, if contemplated deeply, will generate this question.

The unprecedented in every instant is the home of the eternal. The unprecedented has no antecedent. It is the absolute new as distinguished from what is novel. The great Danish thinker, Kierkegaard, defined the instant as an "atom of eternity". This implies that ~~As much~~ it cannot be one moment among others in the temporal chain of cause and effect. The Buddha, noting the circularity of cause and effect, observed that if there is only cause and effect then there cannot be the liberation of self-awakening. Self-awakening is an instantaneous leap out of causalism into a sphere unmodified by the uses of time.

We are now in a position to contemplate the seemingly contradictory term, eternal-life. Even though the sphere into which self—

awakening leaps is not contaminated by time it nonetheless irradiates and redeems it. This being so, eternal-life is realizable now, upon this present instant of self-awakening. Eternal-life is not limited to a beginning after death but as eternal it is ever present and as life it is now. Self-awakening is not a gradual illumination as though one were lifting a shade within a darkened room. Self-awakening suddenly, ~~[illegible]~~ instantaneously sees the intrinsic light of one's own being where before there was only darkness caused by the blindness of self-misunderstanding.

When Jesus prays to his Father in heaven, saying "This is eternal life that they should keep on knowing thee ...." he points up that nothing of this knowing can be reduced to the known. This knowing is ever afresh, unprecedented, free from the duality of the knower and the known, experiencer and experienced, controller and controlled. One keeps on awakening to it that there is no ~~[illegible]~~ intrinsic separation and division since, in the words of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, "Nothing was divided and there is nothing to unite." knowledge which is in bondage to time no longer hinders knowing which keeps on ~~[illegible]~~ leaping into the

into the sphere of the abiding, the ever present now.

II

Every language contains certain words which are particularly strong in their power and compass to disclose what they express. The English word, 'understand,' is one of these. ~~Had~~ Its ~~clearly distinct it is~~ clear distinction from the word knowledge is sharply brought forward in the words of an old African wise woman who remarked: "The white man knows a very great deal but doesn't understand anything." She put her finger on the heart of the word. The English word 'understand' denotes not only a work of ~~intelligence~~ intellect. It includes also a response from the heart. It embraces a dual meaning. On the one hand, to understand is to comprehend, to discern. On the other, it includes empathy, sympathy, the resonating of one heart to another precisely as the other's uniqueness is intuitively embraced. These features of understanding are open to intelligence but closed to calculative reason. Whatever intellect can abstract from these affections it cannot stand in for their concrete expressions; so, one can say to another, "yes, it is the case that you know all about me but what really matters is that you

understand me." At that point, unless I am mistaken in the other, a gentle peace suffuses our mutual presence, and, as we say, we understand one another.

The duality in unity in the word, 'understand' lies deeper than the distinction within it between a matter of the head and the heart. Quite simply, the word means to stand under. To stand under comprises the counter-motion of a simultaneous movement both upward and downward. Stand has for its root the Indo-European *sta, to hold oneself upright. The human person and the tree have in common that each stands at 90° to the earth that supports it. This geometrical relation, through no fault of its own, contributes to the human psychological illusion that each of us is the center and pivot of his or her natural world. But even freedom from this egoic self-deception cannot change our human necessity, namely, that we are counter-directed between the movement upward by which we stand and the movement downward that roots our posture to its base. Further, the borderline between these counter-tendencies

is not geometrical. It exists vibratively, waveringly and, to an obstinate perspective, even ~~waveringly~~ waywardly.

As this is so for the body how much more so is it for the psyche. The soul is stretched between its desire to exist more loftily and that lowly equanimity which does not try to go beyond where it cannot yet begin. The foolish illusion that one is the center of the universe can be dropped but not this counter-tension which is a permanent feature of our human nature. Unlike the spirit which has no agenda, the soul must awaken to the counterplay between exaltation and humility. These are almost universally misconceived, exaltation as prestige and humility as humiliation.

Even when exaltation and humility are understood in their correct relation in which humility is the exaltation, the soul's counterpoise still obtains since the health of the spirit is always critical always at risk, instant by instant. "The sage is not sick because he is sick of being sick; this is the secret of of health" says Lao Tzu (71).

Since this structure of our nature abides without change, it is a matter of

bearing it well or ill in the now. To bear oneself well is to stand under the obligation to be true to one's own nature. It is a question of authenticity, whether or no I will hold to my own way of being what and who I am, ~~in the world~~ which existence has required of me from the moment I came into the world. Existence has always the first move and specifies in advance not only my way of being but also the way of every being throughout the term of its natural career. The truth of any being's existence hangs on fidelity to its unique way of being, even at the cost of its individual existence. There is not only cognitive or logical truth but also existential truth, the truth that lies outside of thought. Erich Frank (Philosophical Understanding and Religious Truth, 114) defines existential truth as "To be that which one is, is true." This authentic way of being cannot be expressed ~~[illegible]~~ self-consciously. One cannot, in the strict sense, copy oneself. Yet, self-betrayal is a fact and an all too frequent ~~[illegible]~~ occurrence. It happens when thought obtrudes upon one's intuitive response to what is at hand. Timely action is

lost. Almost inevitably at such times we say "I have let myself down."

From this it follows that living true to myself, bearing myself well, is not a matter of developing from a worse state to a better as though one could progress from self-betrayal to self-authenticity. Rather, it is a matter of not falling out of one's natural state to begin with. In the natural state there is no identifying with my idea of myself or even with my felt self-presence. Every world-class athlete understands this at the level of physical action. Not all such athletes realize that principle in living out their lives as a whole. The attitude that frees them for superlative physical feats is the same attitude that frees us all from self-betrayal when that attitude governs the actual character and quality of our total living. This attitude of full openness to the unprecedented present instant cannot be one attitude among others but must inform my every action if wholeness is to obtain.

What is the stance that underlies my bearing myself well? It is patience. This answer might surprise given the low

esteem to which this concept has fallen in this century. Contemporary standard English translations of the Greek New Testament in numerous instances replace the translation, 'patience', with the word endurance. These words, when contemplated in depth disclose how dramatically they differ in spirit. Patience transcends time; endurance is time bound; it looks for release.

The beautiful Greek word for patience, hypomonē means literally, 'remaining under' or 'staying behind'. The kinship between patience and understanding reveals itself on noting that they are free from any projection upon the future. Unlike endurance whose strain longs for relief to come, patience neither tires nor expects as understanding neither withers nor blows its own trumpet. Knowledge can parade itself theatrically. ~~[illegible]~~ If understanding became self-conscious ~~[illegible]~~ it would perish ~~[illegible]~~. Patience and understanding though operating with time are not the children of time. They are above time while bearing up activities within time. Patience consists in suspending the will to completion, in leaving it empty of design, detached and open to the unprecedented

in every present instant. In like spirit understanding stands abidingly a thing's way, supporting it, resonating to it regardless of the thing's ~~fortunes~~ style or fortunes for good or ill. Understanding as a work of love abides timelessly.

Not to Misunderstand and Timing.

¶ To misunderstand is to misinterpret in one or more respects something or someone already known. We cannot misinterpret what is not in some degree already intelligible. This holds true even for meeting the strange. Unless the strange exhibited at least one feature we recognized, we should be unable to apprehend it at all. This is so obvious that it is apt to escape notice. However, the philosopher studies the obvious to discern those ~~the~~ qualities that lie below its ~~the~~ surface. Since time out of mind the paramount question for thinkers has been what of all there is, is the fundamental reality; or, what is the case beyond all doubt? In the main western thought has held, with the exception of religious thought, two different answers to this question. They are the realist and idealist

theses. Realism, the first and older of these two, holds that the world of things is all there is to reality and that I, in the midst of them, am one of those things, too. Idealism rejects this and claims, rather, that the sole reality is the subject who thinks the world. Instead of taking the world as it is, as does the realist, the idealist makes the world to be what it is, a creature of thought.

The ~~[illegible]~~ radical difficulty for each position can be put quite simply. For the realist there can be no absolute certainty that what exists there in front of me continues to exist after I have left it. For the idealist there can be no absolute independence of thought since the thinker never finds himself other than coexisting with something else in front of him, facing and opposing the very self he takes to be himself.

In the last three chapters of his <u>Some Lessons in Metaphysics</u>, Ortega ~~[illegible]~~ offers a deep and brilliant critique of both realism and idealism, demonstrating the inadequacy of both. He then offers his own alternative thesis to both at the end of the ~~[illegible]~~ critique: "Absolute reality, as life, is at once immanent and

transcendent ---- But that immanence does not mean that it is converted into subjectivity, into I myself. I am not my life. This, which is reality, is composed of myself and of things. The things are not I, nor am I the things. We are mutually transcendent, but we are both immanent in that absolute ~~existence~~ co-existence which is life.... My life is not mine, but I belong to it. This is the broad, immense reality of my coexistence with things.

This last statement, "My life is not mine, but I belong to it" brings us full circle back to Socrates who neither collapsed himself into the world nor the world into himself. In proclaiming that ~~the~~ an unexamined life is not worth living he saw his life as not ~~belonging to it~~ his own while nonetheless ~~he belonged~~ he yet belonged to it. This transcendence of life to the world and to oneself calls for our correct relation to it. What one belongs to has the right of disposal so that ~~a~~ thing's ~~individual's~~ inadequate relation to life sometimes results in life's withdrawing from it absolutely.

Life is lived out between the timeless and time. ~~The~~ Situated as it

is in the middle it does not enjoy the absolute security of the timeless nor is it reducible to the sheer accidents of time. It both hints of timelessness and threatens dissolution. Life, then is problematic for us and calls for the keenest attention if we are to live well. It is not the case that life lives itself out mechanically in us; rather, it is in our quality of living that we lay hold on life.

Life lived well is not a matter of timelessness or of time but of timing. By the timely, I do not mean something opportunistically grabbed. What is timely upon every instant is what attends and follows from a meditational attitude. A meditational attitude is receptive to the voice of Socratic intuition or what I call primal intuition. This is the voice that Socrates said never told him what to do but what not to do. This requires an astonishing degree of faith to obey it since reason has no part in it, indeed cannot have a part in it since primal intuition opens out upon the incalculable, the unprecedented in every present instant.

Before we bolt from this, let us note

that intelligence is not embarrassed by this. The root meaning of the word intelligence means something gathered in between. Between what? Between the timeless and time, which is the timely.

Intelligence, which is never restless, waits quietly, unattached by within the in-between. It waits upon what is specified for us in advance, what we can have no knowledge of ahead of time. Intelligence obeys the negative summons of primal intuition and rejoices in the unheralded that comes to pass.

Primal intuition calls upon that creative inhibition that halts before what at the time ought not to be known or acted upon and might never be known or acted upon since it would land us in self-misunderstanding.

Not to misunderstand, then, in this context means not to misunderstand oneself by disobeying the warnings from primal intuition against a particular present action. Obedience to it places oneself precisely within the timely. Timeliness is the practical equivalent of what Krishnamurti calls in his Notebooks (101)

"a thinking born out of the total emptiness of the mind; that emptiness has no center and so is capable of infinite movement. Creation is born out of this emptiness but is not the creation of man putting things together. That creation of emptiness is 'love and death'"

The creation pointed to here is not a process. It is instantaneous. Human transformation, if genuine, is instantaneous since it is a creation. As a creation, not a making or re-making, it necessarily is independent of knowledge and time since the transcendence of creation is also the total destruction of what preceded it.

Perhaps we are now in a position to attempt a descriptive definition of both spirituality and wholeness. In the first I shall employ some of Krishnamurti's words. Spirituality consists in denying what is false without knowing in advance what is truth. "It is to see the false in the false and to see the truth in the false, and it is the truth that denies the false. You see what is false and the very seeing of what is false is the truth." Spirituality is ~~obeying~~ the instantaneous obeying of primal intuition's negative summons without knowing ~~in advance~~ why its warning should be heeded.

Wholeness is the intact condition of our original nature. It is realized, awakened to, instantaneously. It is not reached through a process nor is it an integration of aggregated parts.

These definitions will seem radical. They are meant to be since human transformation is not a matter of knowledge or time. It is the instaneous awakening to the freedom of being a light unto oneself, the destruction of the bondage of causalism, for the former things are truely passed away.